

SOUTHWEST COORDINATING GROUP (SWCG)

January 21-22, 2004 Meeting Minutes

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Regional Office, Albuquerque, NM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kirk Rowdabaugh (Chair), Tom Zimmerman (1/21/04)/Bill Waterbury (1/22/04), Willie Begay, Jeff Whitney, Bob Lee, Bryan Swift, Nancy Neskaukas, Pam McAlpin, Dugger Hughes, Jay Ellington (Exec. Sec.)

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: None

GUESTS: Bob Lineback, Dave Bott, Denise McCaig

The meeting began at 0900, January 21, 2004.

Minutes for the 11/14 meeting were reviewed and approved.

FOLLOW-UP AGENDA ITEMS FROM 11/14 MEETING:

INFORMATION ISSUES

NWCG has issued draft guidelines on media access. Discussion revolved around embedded media, prohibition due to safety, geographic area being more restrictive, state/county restrictions, and camp access versus line access. The SWCG reviewed a copy of the guidelines requesting only one change to the documentation

SW FIRE USE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Tom Zimmerman provided the SWCG with a synopsis of nominations submitted for a 2004 SW Fire Use Management Team. By the time of the meeting, there were not enough nominations received to field a full team. The SWA is seeking a team since the Area uses a number of national teams annually (i.e. 9 assignments in SWA for 2003). Nationally, a group has been established that will provide national oversight of WFU teams, including assistance in acquiring equipment, and assisting teams (e.g. SWA) that are short personnel.

DECISION: Tom will follow-up with the National Group.

NIMO

SWCG has previously submitted their response and is currently awaiting NWCG response.

DECISION: Bryan Swift will follow-up with the NIMO group.

WORK/REST GUIDELINES

SWCG agrees with the changes suggested nationally.

DECISION: Jay will draft a response stating the SWCG has review, likes the changes, and is perfectly acceptable for the SWA.

NEW/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

SMOKE MANAGEMENT IN NEW MEXICO

SWCG would like to see smoke management be coordinated at the Zone level. If not, there is a good chance that the State of New Mexico will oversee management. Discussion on the issue revolved around the need for Fuels Specialists to be involved, work between Zones and MAC Group, coordinate with Zone Coordinating Groups to get smoke management in their Charters, be aware of potential competition between Zones, and bringing the Regional Executive Committee (REC) into the picture.

DECISION: Bob Lee will draft a letter on behalf of SWCG to the REC stating the need for coordination, with contact names and numbers.

NEW MEXICO DISPERSION/VENTILATION CATEGORIES VERSUS MODELING

DECISION: SWCG will have Chuck Maxwell look at the "Fair vs Good" categories and possibly ask for a variance or waiver.

ARIZONA STATE SMOKE MANAGEMENT

The AZ Smoke Management group would like to receive fuels data (ie. fuel model, loading, and intensity) on each large fire in Arizona. The SWCG discussed and issued direction that this information would be inserted on the ICS-209 form for all large fires, including NM fires, in the Southwest Area starting with the 2004 fire season.

DECISION: Jay will insure the proper terminology is entered in the 2004 SWA Mobilization Guide.

THREE-TIER DISPATCHING IN THE SWA

Dugger provided the SWCG with the latest survey information he has collected since the last SWCG meeting. He discussed with the SWCG funding, BIA internet issues, dispatching is more than fires, state dispatching offices, east/west zones, workforce analysis, and co-locating first. Overall, the primary question from the field is "what is driving this?" The SWCG discussed feasibility, Red Book requirements, compelling reasons for not going to 3-tier, lessons learned report, direction to move forward, creating a committee/working group to work on the issue, States being a part of each Zone charter, financial issues related to dispatching State resources, and clarification of the overall objective given the SWCG from the REC.

DECISION: The SWCG decided to table the 3-tier dispatching issue until they receive clarification on direction from the SW Strategy. The SWCG will discuss clarification of the objectives with the REC/SW Strategy at their meeting February 3-4, 2004. After meeting with the SW Strategy, the SWCG will provide Dugger with the objectives at the Feb 23rd SWCG meeting. At that time, Dugger will put together a team to develop alternatives to meet these objectives. A timeframe for a draft product will be determined at the 23rd meeting.

SOUTHWEST AREA TYPE 1 TEAM SELECTIONS

Jeff Whitney and Dan Oltrogge were formally accepted as Type 1 IC's for the 2004 fire season. Jeff provided the SWCG with a copy of his and Dan's initial roster for approval by the SWCG. As the SWCG reviewed the rosters, they realized the number of names listed was greater than the configuration established in the national mobilization guide. Both IC's were requested to review their rosters and trim them down to the configuration size, with the understanding that additional folks can be ordered by the receiving unit at the request of the incoming IC. The final rosters will be posted to the SWA website once they are finalized by the IC's.

Jeff agreed with the SWCG to recuse himself during MAC Group discussions on resource allocations, when his team is assigned and involved.

Jeff would like the SWCG, through Dugger, to develop an Acquisition Plan for the teams, prior to the season beginning. The plan would allow for purchase of plotters, printers, computers, FAX machines, cells, digital cameras, etc. Dugger is working with Jeff on the Plan.

SWCC UPDATE

SWA MOBILIZATION GUIDE 2004/SWA WEBSITE/FUELS MONITORING PROGRAM

Jay provided the SWCG with update requests and changes for the 2004 Mobilization Guide. Changes for the year include inserting a section on Automated Flight Following, uses of ROSS, information to be placed in ICS-209 Remarks block, inserting SWCG MOU in Appendix, and additional pen and ink changes. Jay also informed the SWCG that the SWA website may be moving to another URL before the end of 2004. The proposed URL address will be <http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc>. And finally, Jay distributed information pertaining to the new Fuels Monitoring Program being established through the Predictive Services Group.

SWCC BUSINESS/OPERATIONS PLAN

Dugger distributed to the group a breakdown of SWCC annual operating costs.

DISPATCHERS WORKSHOP

The Annual Dispatchers Workshop will be held in Prescott, January 6-30, 2004. Arizona Fire Chiefs Association will be making a presentation to the Dispatchers proposing a Statewide Mob Plan for wildland fire among fire departments within Arizona. Kirk has seen the proposal and requested the SWCG draft a letter to the Association indicating non-support on behalf of the Federal agencies. Federal members of the SWCG agreed to sign.

INCIDENT QUALIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEM (IQCS)

Dugger stated Mindy Stevenson, SWCC Coordinator, is the SWA liaison to the national group. SACS is planned to be shutdown July 2, 2004.

SWCC CENTER DIRECTOR DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Dugger asked the SWCG if he needed a specific delegation of authority from the SWCG. The SWCG stated that the Center Directors Delegation of Authority is covered through the Preparedness Levels listed in the Southwest Area Mob Guide.

SW STRATEGY

Denise McCaig provided the SWCG with an update of activities occurring with the SW Strategy. Five task groups have been created by the SW Strategy to develop strategies to protect communities and restore fire adapted ecosystems... by reducing hazardous fuels and increasing fire preparedness. The five task groups include (1) ... restore the health of fire adapted ecosystems, (2)... removal of small diameter materials and develop industrial infrastructure, (3) ... community partnerships to reduce wildland fire threats, (4) ... implement 'Lessons Learned recommendations, and (5) ... finalize and adopt some geographic Restriction and Closure Procedures. A second topic discussed by Denise was the relationship between the SWCG and SW Strategy. Discussion consisted of specific tasks, standing representation with delegation, organization of SW Strategy, SWCG Chair at all SW Strategy meetings, adequate info/input to SW Strategy, delineating between recommendation and update, and action oriented groups.

DECISION: The SWCG decided they should provide the SW Strategy with the following at their March 9 meeting.

- (1) No employees applying for Finance in S-420.
- (2) 3-Tier/4-Tier Dispatch Organization
- (3) Team staffing.
- (4) Help for management of Smoke Management of NM Zones

- (5) Preseason assessment.
- (6) How do we want to present Agency Administration fire training, Interagency or Single Agency
- (7) Can members of SWCG sit on each of SW Strategy Working Teams in Forest Heath, Borders, and Water.
- (8) Presentation on how SWCG and working teams are organized, review MOU, delegation of Authority, relationship to other Geographic Areas, and current activities.

SWCG MEETING MANAGEMENT

A general discussion was held by all SWCG members pertaining to the current method and procedures the group follows to hold meetings. Jeff distributed the handout titled "A Summary of the Interaction Method." Each member of the SWCG got an opportunity to state their preference on how the SWCG meetings should be held. Discussion included, but was not limited to, the level of interaction and formality, recycling of agenda items, distribution of meeting minutes, delegating to Committees and/or Working Groups, and cell phones.

DECISION: The SWCG decided for future meetings:

- (1) Cell phones need to be turned off
- (2) No side talk (ie. self-discipline)
- (3) Start on time
- (4) Remain on task
- (5) Keep discussion open and informal
- (6) Make better use of Committees and/or Working Groups
- (7) Establish objectives
- (8) Review minutes prior to meeting, especially for looking at agenda items
- (9) Table items, as necessary
- (10) Categorize agenda topics as information, discussion, or decision
- (11) At the end of each meeting review and critique agenda topics
- (12) Distribute agenda items, minutes, etc to Zone Coordinating Groups.
- (13) Hold SWCG meetings at various locations throughout the Area, not just ABQ and PHX.
- (14) Reduce the number of meetings during fire season.
- (15) At least one member of the SWCG attend team close-outs, and provide member going to meeting with issues brought up during conference calls.
- (16) Appoint a liaison to attend Zone Coord. Group meetings. (Tabled until next SWCG meeting a discussion on listing the dates for all Zone Coord. Group meetings.)

SW FIRE USE TRAINING ACADEMY CHARTER

Bill advised the SWCG a National Fuels Group in Boise has reviewed FUTA and PFTS and is planning to fund these programs nationally, up to \$1M. They are currently establishing standards/guidelines for both training facilities. Discussion by the SWCG included keeping FUTA under SWCG supervision since it is only a 2-6 week program twice per year, meeting national standards, requesting a national liaison, funding agreement update (ie, updated by Carol Salo and to be forwarded to FS Fiscal by Bill), and keeping agency representation to FUTA Steering Group remain active and attending all meetings.

DECISION: The SWCG decided the existing draft FUTA Charter is "good to go" and should be signed and implemented as soon as possible and to continue working with the National Fuels Group on the issue and insure they understand the need for SWCG involvement and supervision.

NAVAJO HOTSHOT REVIEW

Navajo Agency is doing a field review of the Navajo Hotshots and would like a SWCG person to be on the review team. The purpose of the review will be to certify the crew. The review will be in addition to the National Hotshot Guidelines.

DECISION: Jeff stated Mark Kaib (USFWS) will fill the assignment on behalf of the SWCG.

CREW REPRESENTATIVE

The question "do we need to have CREP's with every Type 2 crew?" was posed to the SWCG. It was mentioned that CREPS are there to relieve political pressures at home for Crew Bosses. Willie stated Navajo Agency didn't need CREP's and see's the Crew Boss position as being adequate. Per the National Mob Guide, CREP's are not required.

DECISION: After some discussion, the SWCG decided drop the current wording in Section 22.3.c of the SWA Mob Guide and insert "It is the discretion of the sponsoring agency on whether to assign a CREP, per SW Crew Guidelines." In addition, the SWCG decided to change the wording in Section 22.3.d from "five or more" to "four" and add ", or when SWCC Director deems necessary" in the first sentence.

MAC GROUP OPERATING PLAN

DECISION: Jay will send out MAC Operating Plan to all Zone Coord. Group chairs for review.

SWCG CHAIR

Effective upon completion of this meeting and through December 2005, the new Chairperson will be Bill Waterbury and the Vice-Chairperson will be Pam McAlpin. The SWCG expressed its thanks to Kirk Rowdabaugh for his efforts as Chairperson for the past 2 and ½ years. Transition will be discussed between Bill and Kirk to make sure all current and planned events are covered.

The next meeting of the Southwest Coordinating Group is scheduled for February 23-24, 2004 in Tucson, AZ, starting at 1300. Agenda topics:

- a. Agency Administrator Training Needs
- b. MAC calls/meetings agenda/protocols
- c. Objectives for 3-Tier Dispatching Standards
- d. Preparation for March 9 meeting with REC on March 9.

Tentative future SWCG meeting dates:

- a. May 25-26, 2004 in Santa Fe (Nancy to setup)
- b. July 13-14, 2004 in Flagstaff (Kirk to setup)

SW MAC Group Meeting:

- a. March 18-19, 2004 in Prescott (Pre-season meeting)

The meeting adjourned at 1300, January 22, 2004.

/s/ Kirk Rowdabaugh

Chair

Southwest Coordinating Group

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